GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1954
ANSWERED ON:08.03.2006
TACKLING TB MENACE
Singh Shri Prabhunath

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) the measures being taken/proposed to be taken to overcome the multiple drug resistant strains of TB;

(b) whether the Government is contemplating to make use of the technological breakthrough achieved in gene therapy recently by the NII, New Delhi, in tackling the TB menace;

(c) if so, whether any action plan has been prepared in this regard; and

(d) if so, the salient features thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE (SMT. PANABAKA LAKSHMI)

(a): MDR-TB arises because of improper/irregular/inadequate treatment. It is internationally recognized that if a good DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment Short-course) programme with good cure rates is in place, it can prevent the emergency of MDR-TB. It is the policy of Government of India to prevent MDR-TB by stopping it at its inception by wide-spread use of DOTS. Revised National TB Control Programme (RNTCP) under which the DOTS strategy is used has good results and more than 8 out of 10 TB cases are cured by improving services. Under the Programme drugs are given under direct observation which ensures complete and regular treatment, thus preventing MDR-TB, by January, 2006, 1083million (97%) of the population in 620 districts/reporting units is getting benefited by DOTS strategy .Only 14 districts are yet to implement RNTCP. These are in the final stages of preparation and the entire country will be covered under RNTCP during the financial year 2005-06. The RNTCP policy also insists that MDR-TB should be diagnosed in the laboratory and not arbitrarily in clinics by the physicians. Therefore, under RNTCP Phase II, it is planned to first establish a network of RNTCP accredited quality-assured Intermediate Reference Laboratories (IRL), providing culture and Drug Sensitivity Testing (DST) services for the RNTCP. Concurrently, a network of DOTS Plus sites, as per international guidelines capable of enrolling and providing care and management for MDR-TV cases would be established. A total of 24 DOTS Plus sites are planned to be established across the country over the next five years, with a view to have in place RNTCP DOTS Plus services that are capable of enrolling for treatment at least 5000 "new" MDR-TB patients every year by 2010.

(b): It has been reported that Scientist at National Institute of Immunology have identified five genes that enable Mycobacterium tuberculosis, the TB-causing bacterium, to acquire the iron that it needs to sustain growth and promote infections. Targeting genes within this cluster may represent a good strategy for eventual drug development against tuberculosis and other mycobacterial infections. This research is in very early stage.

(c): Since the above research is in early stage so it is not possible to prepare an action plan for its use.

(d): Does not arise.